

Washington, D.C. - Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08) expressed her intense disappointment Friday with the final version of the Surface Transportation Board's environmental impact statement, released today, regarding Canadian National's proposed purchase of the EJ&E rail line.

"The STB heard from thousands and thousands of residents about the impact this proposal will have on their communities, but it appears their concerns fell on deaf ears," Bean said. "This document does not go nearly far enough in its descriptions of the disruption this proposal will have on communities or in the remediation it requires."

At Congresswoman Bean's request, the STB began an environmental review of the transaction in late 2007. Following release of a draft version of the Environmental Impact Statement, the STB saw unprecedented community feedback during a series of hearings in the affected areas. Today's final EIS contains the final recommendations from the STB's Section of Environmental Analysis. The STB, a three-member panel appointed by the Bush administration, will now make a final decision on the transaction, and any possible mitigation, based on the recommendations contained in the EIS.

More than 40 communities oppose this transaction, which would result in up to a 900 percent increase in rail traffic along the EJ&E line. The increase will have a significant negative impact on traffic congestion along major roads, public safety, quality of life, environmental quality, and local economies.

"At a time when Americans are regaining some faith in government, the STB is moving in the opposite direction," Bean said. "This environmental impact study fails to protect the safety and security of our families, businesses and communities, and then suggests that our taxpayers should subsidize the profits of Canadian National. It's unjust and un-American."

Below are just some of Bean's objections to the final version of the EIS:

- Egregious burden on local taxpayers. The draft EIS identified 15 grade crossings that will face "substantial effects." Despite the recommendation of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for

Planning and thousands of residents, the final EIS only recommends two grade separations with a 15 percent cost share from Canadian National. With grade separations costing about \$50 million each, this amounts to a major public tax subsidy for CN.

- Continues to ignore effects on Metra's STAR line. Metra, which provides 83 million rides to suburban and city residents each year, says CN has not committed to sharing tracks along the EJ&E. The proposal threatens construction of the long-awaited suburb-to-suburb Metra STAR Line. Despite concerns raised by Metra, Members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation, local elected officials and residents, the final EIS continues to ignore this problem.
- No real help for public safety. While recognizing that emergency service providers and local hospitals will be severely impacted by increased freight traffic, the final EIS only suggests that CN place closed circuit cameras in certain communities that would televise to local public safety agencies and hospitals with views of the crossings. No measure are suggested that would allow first-responders to actually bypass blocked crossings in an emergency.
- No enforcement. For all suggested mitigation, the final EIS suggests that the board should only exercise oversight authority for the first five years of the transaction. After that, communities would be on their own.
- Redundant Voluntary Mitigation. Of the 108 voluntary mitigation measures that Canadian National put forward, the vast majority either reaffirm current regulations or are plain common sense. CN continues to refuse to negotiate in good faith with the majority of impacted communities along the EJ&E.